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CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGIES, IN PARTICULAR AS RELATED TO CRIMES IN URBAN AREAS AND JUVENILE AND VIOLENT CRIMINALITY, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF VICTIMS: ASSESSMENT AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

Background paper for the workshop on mass media and crime prevention

Summary

The present background paper focuses on the role of the mass media in crime prevention, especially in the context of the divergent needs of developing and developed countries, fear of victimization, target audiences and other issues that must be addressed by the United Nations and Member States. It identifies measures adopted or "good practices" followed around the world, as a basis for discussion of the role of the media. Those practices, modified to take into account cultural, societal and religious differences, could be appropriate for dealing with the particular circumstances prevailing in different Member States.

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I. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1993/32 endorsed the programme of work of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, including the holding of a workshop on the subject of mass media and crime prevention.

2. In preparation for that workshop, the Commission studied a number of issues relating to the subject, and invited Member States and all entities involved to prepare video programmes, documents and other presentations.

3. In its resolution 1994/19, the Economic and Social Council invited the workshop on the mass media and crime prevention to seek methods of sensitizing representatives of the mass media to the crimogenic effects of graphic portrayals of violence and sensationalism in the media, particularly on the young, and to consider the possible effects of sensational news coverage on the fairness of criminal trials, with due regard to the need to maintain the freedom of the press. The Council also recommended that the workshop focus on seeking to enlist the support of the media in crime prevention initiatives and on identifying model projects.

4. As indicated by the above mandate, within time and budgetary constraints, the workshop should cover the issue of the influence of mass media on crime, with the aim of arriving at constructive action-oriented solutions to promote "best practices" in matters relating to mass media and crime prevention.

5. Within the framework thus established, the Government of Canada, at the end of 1994, undertook the responsibility of organizing the workshop. The offer to do so was made after one of its original sponsors, in March 1994, unexpectedly withdrew its support.[1] The preparations for the workshop were, however, also supported by the Arab Security Studies and Training Centre (ASSTC) at Riyadh, which is associated with the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, as well as by the Australian Institute of Criminology. Through its generous support and continuous interest, as reflected in the hosting of preparatory meetings, ASSTC assisted greatly in finalizing the preparations for the workshop.*

II. SUBSTANTIVE BACKGROUND

6. The United Nations has historically recognized the value of freedom of expression in building a better world society. Article 55 of the Charter states that the United Nations shall promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the General Assembly, in its resolution 59(I) of 14 December 1946, declared that freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated. A similar view was expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 217 A(III) of 10 December 1948, article 19 of which states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

7. The issue of freedom of the press is very complex. While the media are recognized as an important element of a civilized society, their tendency to exploit and sensationalize crime and violence has been criticized. Attempts to balance the potential negative effects of free media with their clear social value continue.

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*The present paper is the result of a joint effort between the Department of Justice of Canada and Professors Paul Wilson and Peter Putnis (assisted by Teaching Fellow Claire Stapleton) of Bond University, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia.

8. The Third United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders acknowledged the effects of the mass media on youth.[2] The Fourth Congress highlighted the duty of Governments to help to form and lead public opinion in relation to social defence. It was emphasized that provision should be made to lay before the public accurate information about the criminal justice system and its work.[3] The Fifth Congress also recognized the need to promote, through the use of improved educational programmes and the mass communication media, a better understanding on the part of the public of the economic and social consequences of crime, to narrow the gap between the perceptions of personnel working within criminal justice agencies and the general public, and to encourage more active participation of the public in the prevention of criminality.[4]

9. The Sixth Congress reassessed the importance of crime prevention strategies, which required a fully aware public, ready to adopt those useful devices for protection of their goods which technological development made possible. In this field also, programmes for educating the public had usually proved effective.[5]

10. The Seventh Congress developed the discussion on particular strategies in relation to youth crime prevention, including restraints on glamorization of crime by the media, subject to preservation of the freedom of the press. At the same time, it outlined the active role of education as an essential component of realistic crime prevention policies, in order to reach integrated and comprehensive solutions involving all components of the immediate community and the larger society.[6]

11. The Eighth Congress recognized the importance of active crime prevention policies. In the preamble to its resolution on the prevention of urban crime, the Eighth Congress notes "that a successful programme to reduce crime cannot be based solely on the police and criminal justice system and that it must be matched by an active prevention policy which includes means to reinforce common values so that personal and community responsibility regarding crime is acknowledged, as well as social and community development and the reduction of opportunity development and the reduction of opportunities for offending".[7] It further notes that it is the task of Governments and other sectors of society to facilitate the development of local and national prevention programmes, and that prevention must bring together those with responsibility for planning and development, for the family, health, employment and training, housing, social services, leisure activities, schools, the police and the justice system in order to deal with the conditions that generate crime.* In pursuit of those objectives, the Eighth Congress developed an inventory of measures for crime prevention, focused on youth under its topic 4, entitled "Prevention of delinquency, juvenile justice and the protection of the young: policy approaches and directions", and worked on United Nations norms and guidelines in crime prevention and criminal justice.

12. The importance of the mass media in crime prevention was stressed by the participants in the regional preparatory meetings for the Ninth Congress. In particular, the mass media had a very significant role to play in crime prevention education, which needed to begin at an early stage, and to be targeted also at the public in general for the purpose of raising awareness of both the importance of crime prevention and related measures. In this respect, the influence of television and cinema, particularly on the young, was underlined, as well as the participation of the media in prevention campaigns such as "crime stop" programmes involving the use of toll-free telephone numbers by the public.** The consistent and active involvement of the mass media in crime prevention and control was recognized as a means of both raising public awareness and directing attention to the collective sense of responsibility and action that was required. The role of radio,

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*See report of the Asian and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Bangkok, from 17 to 21 January 1994 (A/CONF.169/RPM.1/Rev.1 and Corr.1, para. 59).

**See Report of the African Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Kampala, Uganda, from 14 to 18 February 1994 (A/CONF.169/RPM.2), paras. 28 and 61.

television and advertising agencies was emphasized.* A prerequisite to the success of international, regional and bilateral cooperation in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice was the full utilization and mobilization of resources within the national framework, including the mass media.**

13. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has accorded a high priority to issues concerning the mass media and crime prevention. In a number of reports the Organization has addressed such topics as the "right to communicate", "violence and terror in the mass media" and "a new communication technique, as a challenge for press freedom".[8]

14. In its medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995, UNESCO planned to work in several areas. First, it was concerned to ensure a free flow of information at international as well as national levels, with a wider and better-balanced dissemination, without any obstacle to the freedom of expression, and to strengthen communication capacities in the developing countries, so that they may participate more actively in the communication process.[9] The aims in the second area included the training of journalists and other communication professionals, particularly in the developing countries. In the third area, the aims included the development of media education, by emphasizing the development of critical awareness, the ability to react to any kind of information received, and the education of users to defend their rights.[10]

15. Finally, at two seminars on promoting independent and pluralistic mass media organized jointly by the United Nations and UNESCO in 1991 and 1992, for, respectively, the African and Asian regions, participants emphasized the role of freedom of the press for democratic societies. The Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, held at Windhoek from 29 April to 3 May 1991, in its Declaration of Windhoek on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, among several principles noted that "African States should be encouraged to provide constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press" (A/SPC/47/4, annex, para. 9). The Seminar on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media, held at Alma-Ata from 5 to 9 September 1992, in the Declaration of Alma-Ata on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media (A/SPC/47/3, annex) stated its support of the principles of the Declaration of Windhoek, but also listed project proposals which could assist in translating those principles into action. These projects deal *inter alia* with new legislation, training of journalists, free flow of information and safety of journalists.

16. Although the above account of developments in the United Nations and UNESCO is incomplete, it suffices to show that, so far, considerably more attention in both organizations has been given to the issues concerning the mass media, freedom of information and crime than mass media and crime prevention.

17. In the preparatory documentation for the workshop, it was noted as follows: "The coverage of crime-related issues by mass media has a tendency to be stereotyped all over the world. Research findings disclosed at least three areas in which crime coverage was essentially the same: there is an overrepresentation of violent crime; crime coverage presents a false image of the effectiveness of police and courts in controlling crime and punishing criminals; and finally and most importantly, news coverage fails to educate readers on the factors leading to crime or how to avoid personal victimization. The last point is the most sensitive but, at the same time, viable for follow-up at the United Nations level, which in its work emphasizes that crime prevention and criminal justice education programmes must increasingly take into account the imperative need to reduce crime risk, fear of crime and levels of victimization" (E/CN.15/1993/CRP.2, para. 135).

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*See Report of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at San José, Costa Rica, from 7 to 11 March 1994 (A/CONF.169/RPM.4), para. 75.

**See Report of the Western Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Amman, from 20 to 24 March 1994 (A/CONF.169/RPM.5), para. 19.

18. In the light of the world crime situation, and taking into account the powerful influence of the mass media and its potential educational usages, the development of effective crime prevention and criminal justice programmes would, by contributing to the wider effort to prevent crime and victimization, to identify the risks involved and to decrease the opportunities for crime, be highly beneficial to all concerned.*

III. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

19. The two major issues that may be considered during the workshop are, on the one hand, the ways in which the mass media can be effective in crime prevention and, on the other, the extent to which the media are responsible for encouraging crime or inuring the public to crime. The first issue should address the ways in which the mass media have, as part of their historical mission as social "watchdog", taken a leading role in many countries in uncovering crime and corruption. The media have also cooperated in various government-mandated crime prevention programmes. The second issue follows from the first. While the media may be instrumental in uncovering crime, they also take a direct interest in sensationalizing it. Media representation of crime, whether as news or popular drama, has a profound impact on its audience. Irresponsible media representation of crime can have the effect of further injuring the victims of crime, romanticizing offenders and inuring the public to the effects of violence. The power of the mass media to influence and affect society is a double-edged sword; the same power that permits it to contribute to crime and violence also makes it an effective crime prevention tool.

A. Crime prevention versus crime control

20. It is important to distinguish in the above context the concept of crime control from that of crime prevention. Crime prevention is not necessarily about law enforcement or the activities of the traditional agencies of criminal justice systems, namely the police, prosecution, courts and prisons. Crime prevention is the attempt to use social resources to change the conditions that can predispose people to commit crimes.

21. Crime prevention programmes include community programmes designed to improve social conditions, public education campaigns to alert people to the consequences of deviant activities and inform potential victims of ways to minimize risk, and programmes to reduce the opportunity for crime by improving the security of property and the person. Some crime prevention programmes have had a fairly general focus, while others have been developed for a range of specific crimes such as drug abuse, terrorism, burglary, theft, vandalism, shoplifting and personal violence.

22. The ultimate goal of crime prevention is to create safe communities, and any crime prevention effort must actively involve all sectors of society. This would include Governments at all levels, the private sector, professional associations, community groups, educational and other institutions, the public, international bodies and the mass media. During the workshop, the role of the mass media will be considered in particular.

B. What is the scope of mass media?

23. The scope of any discussion of mass media and crime prevention covers more than just television; the radio, comic books, literature, folk tales, music and dance are some of the most effective media in developing countries. In more technologically developed societies, the pace of change occurring in the mass media is outstripping the ability of observers to categorize them. The broadcast media is, in fact, moving to "narrowcasting", advertising is becoming indistinguishable from entertainment, computerization is leading to

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*See discussion guide on demonstration and research workshops to be held at the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (A/CONF.169/PM.1/Add.1), para. 43.

utterly new models of mass communication, and the various forms of print media are increasingly specialized. At one level this is leading to an increasingly knowledge-based society in which valuable information is readily accessible. At another, all of the media are increasingly carrying material, notably violent or pornographic material, whose social value is questionable at best. As the media become more sophisticated, however, it also becomes more responsive to its consumers. The media are not independent arbiters of behaviour. Since the mass media to some extent is reactive as opposed to proactive, the role of the audience must be recognized. Simply banning television violence will not lead to the end of violence in society.[11]

C. Diversity of media systems

24. The diversity of national mass media systems with respect to social and political functions, technology and audience penetration must be recognized. The mass media cannot be seen as a monolithic entity. Also, differing views of the relationship between the press and the State must be borne in mind. Nevertheless, while technologies and traditions differ, all media communicate messages, and the ideas are far more important than the method of transmission.

25. Audience studies indicate the ways in which the cultural context affects the reception of media messages. In Japan, comics are an extremely popular medium, selling several million copies each week, and have a significant impact on young media consumers.[12] In much of Latin America, telenovelas are equally popular. In many developed and developing countries, the most popular media are radio, films, books, music and plays. However, in many cultures, television is clearly pervasive: in the United States of America there is a per person average of eight hours viewing per day;[13] in Japan, it is more than two hours,[12] and in Costa Rica about six hours. Viewing habits differ in other countries depending on a number of factors, including access to the medium and the availability of alternative media. While the pervasiveness of television must be acknowledged, other media need to be taken into account as well.

26. The distinction between mass media and media in general should not limit participants in their discussion of possible solutions, as the distinction is somewhat arbitrary, blurred and not particularly useful in view of the rapid development in communication technologies, particularly satellite technology. By using mass-media technology such as satellites, resources might be delivered centrally, but distribution and implementation could take place locally by means of video cassettes, integrating content relevant to the audience concerned. To present a message that is culturally appropriate to the audience, methods such as those used in India (drama, puppetry or recitals) might need to be used. In other cases, material might have to be presented in a particular cultural context (for example, discussion led by a significant community member). Consequently, discussion and implementation of crime prevention strategies using the mass media must be broad enough to allow for the range of communication forms that may be effective in a particular situation (for example, broadcast technologies, video cassette screenings, performances, discussion groups and interpersonal counselling).

27. The need for culturally appropriate communication strategies in crime prevention has long been recognized by scholars in the field. For instance, a study investigating the problem of criminal gangs in India found that, in rural areas where illiteracy is high, newspapers are not an effective means of public communication. The study noted the potential of the broadcast media in public education programmes where audiovisual means of communication can serve as an alternative to the press in reaching illiterate people.[14] Similarly, in Papua New Guinea, where society is changing rapidly because of increased foreign logging activities and the numbers of youths moving from their rural roots to urban centres and taking up new, more materialistic values, crime is a serious concern. In that country, where many are illiterate, radio is a powerful medium. In particular, one very popular nationwide daily call-in show provides a vehicle through which people can discuss the issues that concern them. The host of the show is an advocate of crime prevention, and his very popular broadcasts aim at getting the youth of the country to bond with their old values and eschew criminal activity.

28. Other examples of such programmes include the weekly public awareness radio programme "Eye of the Eagle", broadcast on Radio Zulu. This programme encourages audience participation through debate and discussion on issues such as unemployment, education and health. South Africa's Valeka Radio runs a programme to educate the public on their rights and their duties as citizens; the format of the programme is that of soap-opera dramas which have a local flavour and reflect current situations and problems faced in the community.

29. Just as it may be culturally appropriate to use traditional media (folk art forms like drama, puppetry, recitals etc.) as a necessary and effective community strategy, it may also be desirable in developing countries to use the media for mass communications in ways that are different from those used in the developed world. A document prepared for the UNESCO International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems reiterated:

> "We should address ourselves to the need for making films for information and motivation relevant to local conditions. An interesting implication would be that, for localized communication, a developing country might need low cost portable, small gauge technology more than developed countries do."[15]

30. In many parts of the world, slide presentations, role playing, dance and song are the accepted and appropriate media for communicating with the population. Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Kenya and Malaysia have all used poster campaigns to combat domestic violence. In China, a similar campaign displayed information for victims of violence on city bulletin boards. In Jamaica, the Sistren Theatre Collective uses drama-in-education workshops to deal with issues such as violence. In Bangladesh, India and Peru, a street theatre has been used to raise awareness. In Costa Rica, comic books and a musical group (called Claro Oscuro) are effective in raising public consciousness. In Barbados, radio call-in programmes, television panel discussions and feature articles in the print media help demonstrate national concern for such issues as violence against women and children, and help to build support for action on those issues.[16]

D. Potential of the media in crime prevention efforts

31. It is now generally recognized that the criminal justice system can only play a limited role in the prevention of crime; other complementary approaches are needed. Mass media has the ability to function as a powerful educational tool in crime prevention efforts.

32. There is a vast literature on the social role of the mass media. Some of this material is not relevant to issues of crime prevention, but there are a few key areas that are of particular significance. These include the role of the media as a prime agent of knowledge production, reproduction and dissemination. The media are often characterized as a watchdog, public investigator, or information broker. Given social and political encouragement, the media can play a key role as a partner in community action taken to prevent crime.

(i) Media as generator of behaviour and ideas

33. There is considerable debate about the long-term effects of the media generally in setting standards of behaviour, in changing consumer patterns etc. Some assert that most people derive their understanding of deviance and control primarily from the news and other mass media,[17] in other words, the media is a source of information. Other experts argue that "journalists play a key role in constructing visions of order, stability and change, and in influencing the control practices that accord with these visions".[18] Political leaders have long recognized the valuable and powerful propaganda tool state-controlled media can be in promoting an "ideal" social order and in discrediting political opposition. Most people agree that there is an interactive

relationship between the media and the society it serves; while the media reflect social concerns, it also helps shape the way these are perceived by the public.

(ii) Internationalization of mass media

34. The effects of an increasingly homogeneous international mass media may be important in discussions of international crime prevention. A comparison of newspaper crime coverage in the United States and in other countries (Australia, Canada, France, India, Israel, Kenya, Nigeria, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) indicates that they all present crime in a similar way. There is an overrepresentation of violent or sensational crime, and newspapers fail to educate readers on the causes of crime and how to avoid personal victimization.[19] With increasingly globalized media, exemplified by the advent of networks such as CNN, Star and Galaxy into the markets of South-East Asia, world perceptions of crime may become still more consistent, even if they are consistently incorrect.

(iii) Process of selectivity of news

35. The selection of crime news is well documented,[20] and some researchers see a link between selection and the construction of "crime waves".[21] Others hold the view that concern about crime and punishment in most western countries is locked into an unremitting cycle of panic and complacency,[22] and that the media play a role in generating exaggerated fears of crime.[23] Studies demonstrate that newspapers focus on violent crimes to a level that is not reflected in the crime statistics.[19]

36. For example, "crime stop" programmes that encourage viewer assistance in solving crimes and locating missing persons through reconstructions and offender identification are used in many countries. Viewers are asked to phone in their information and the audience is given feedback as the case progresses. Typically, such programmes are presented against a backdrop of a busy police office with police spokespersons appearing on camera to provide information and seek public support. While such programmes are popular and may contribute to both the image of the police and some crime solving and prevention, they have also been criticized for the voyeuristic appeal of some reconstructed material and their focus on violent crime, which contributes to the public's perception of its incidence and hence to increased levels of fear in the community.[24] Some also fear that such programmes contribute to the emergence of a more authoritarian, "Big-Brother" society.[25]

37. The tendency of the media to reflect rather than lead social reform has meant that it has been as guilty as the rest of society of stereotyping women and ethnic and religious minorities. The media has a responsibility to use its power to enlighten the public rather than exploit stereotypes and cultural prejudice, especially where this could contribute to crime against particular groups.

E. Working towards positive media impact

38. There is ample evidence that violence in the media may have a negative influence on children and the socially vulnerable. On the other hand, the positive impact the media can have on behaviour and social responsibility is considerable, and can be felt in the following ways:

(a) The media can play a direct role in mobilizing public opinion and action. For example, the media possess the power to cause an unsafe product to be removed from the market by reporting on it and publicizing its dangers;

(b) They are pivotal in the articulation of the tastes, distinctions, and sensibilities of a culture;

(c) They can provide not only a cultural framework within which people can make moral sense of their experiences, but also a basis on which people can assess moral authorities;[18]

(d) They are a powerful agency of justice which can address unjust practices and often redress personal victimization.

39. Increased awareness and shared concern are the natural forerunners of action and change. The series entitled "What can we do about violence", shown on the Public Broadcasting Service in the United States, is a prime example of how ideas can be shared, adapted and employed in crime prevention by diverse communities. Alarmed by statistics that showed that the incidence of arrests of youth for violent crimes in the United States had risen by 50 per cent between 1985 and 1991, and that arrests of juveniles for murder between 1983 and 1995 had increased by 128 per cent, a renowned journalist set out to discover why there was so much youth crime and what could be done about it. The resulting series explores casual factors and motives for criminal behaviour, and then, by focusing on innovative, community-based efforts to prevent crime, concludes that there is much that can be done by communities in that regard.

F. International collaboration

40. The "networking model" of sharing ideas and fostering joint efforts for change has been adopted by many international organizations, and can serve as a model of future international cooperation. Institutions formed on a regional basis can be effective. For example, the Latin American Institute for Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Offenders prepared a plan of action for identifying a concerted regional approach designed to improve the management of systems for the administration of justice, for responding to new forms of organized crime, for developing mechanisms to guarantee citizen security, and for preventing and controlling public corruption and environmental crime.[26] Other institutions can be effective if organized around specific themes, as in the case of the World Association of the Major Metropolises, through which representatives of the world's major cities cooperate on improving living conditions for city-dwellers who, despite their geographic and economic differences, face common problems caused by urban growth.

IV. THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION: KEY ISSUES

41. The above-mentioned declarations made at the Economic and Social Council seminars to promote independent and pluralistic media, held at Windhoek in 1991 and at Alma-Ata in 1992, confirm the rights to freedom of opinion and expression. But much more could be done, through concrete action by Member States, to ensure that such declarations are implemented. The international media may have a role in promoting free media. In Kenya there was recently an outcry from international journalists after a journalist was imprisoned. The negative publicity that followed may have a significant effect on the economy of the country. International pressure is not necessarily sufficient in all cases. In some countries, despite international pressure to open their societies, the practice of suspending newspapers for publishing materials on issues that "do not serve the public interest and are bound to harm the spirit of public unity" may resume. This may in turn invite more international scrutiny into the question of "freedom of opinion and expression", which may not only explore possible linkages of abuse of that freedom with racism, racial hatred and violence, but also the question of abuse of that right in times of armed conflict.

42. The profound changes in communications technology that are currently taking place will have a radical effect on the debate about freedom of expression. Models of communication are changing, as technology opens avenues for more democratic kinds of mass communication. This not only makes mass communication more difficult to control, but also blurs the line between public and private communication, which have been held to different standards historically. Advances in technology may lead to a more just balance in international communications, or to more homogenized and culturally sterile world media. The impact of

the new technology may depend on the degree to which the new resources are made available and on the development of social and political contexts that will permit their use.[27]

43. Different countries have different approaches to the issue of public access to information about crime. In developing countries the media assume wide latitude in their coverage of crime and criminal trials. Bans on the publication of information are only imposed after carefully balancing freedom of the press and the public right of access to the judicial forum with the rights of the accused and the integrity of the judicial process. Increasingly, the traumatic impact on the victims' families, friends and community of reliving the crime and the stress of the ensuing legal proceedings are also being considered. In other countries, the media have been used to curb political dissent by transmitting well-publicized show trials to illustrate the consequences of crime. There is concern in some countries that new technology will provide access to information that has not been traditionally available, which may lead to political and social instability. Where technology is outstripping the ability of societies to regulate media access, freedom of the press in one country may be seen as a threat to the cultural sovereignty of another. In Canada, the ban on the publication of the details of a trial involving the murder of two young women has led to bans in Canada of United States media reporting on the case. That has, in turn, led to self-censorship by United States media with large markets in Canada.

44. There has been considerable concern that the media may have a direct influence on crime and the outcomes of criminal trials. The more sensational coverage has led to the criticism that media involvement in the criminal justice system may have undue effect on outcomes. The notion that sensational criminal cases deemed to be the "trial of the century" may be "tried in the media", and that due process of law may be compromised has led to demands that the media regulate their own coverage. Increasingly, it is suggested that the right of freedom of expression must be balanced with an awareness of the responsibility of the media.

45. While criticizing the media for their portrayal of crime issues is common, a greater threat to the social order in many countries is crime against the media. Members of the media, perhaps because of their exposure and role in reporting on significant events and issues, may themselves be victims of criminal activities.

46. In the Russian Federation, a popular television journalist was recently murdered, allegedly by organized crime figures who were threatened by his efforts to bring control of advertising revenue to the State-run television network, and thereby eliminate the use of television advertising by corrupt entrepreneurs. The 1994 annual report of the Committee to Protect Journalists documents more than 700 confirmed cases of murder, imprisonment, harassment, censorship and legal reprisals, including a record 173 journalists in prison in 23 countries at the end of the year and 72 journalists killed in the line of duty, with fifty-eight of the deaths appearing to have been deliberate political assassinations, and another 14 while on assignment in battle zones.[28] The question of protection of journalists is frequently an item on the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights, which hears all too often about disappearances, death threats or executions of journalists acting in the line of duty by exercising their basic freedom of expression.

47. Another phenomenon, terrorism, is generating much discussion, especially about live broadcasts of terrorist incidents. Widely publicized airline hijackings in the mid-1980s and other events during which hostages were taken caused the issue to come to a head. Politicians have called for a voluntary blackout of all coverage of terrorist activity, and urged restraint "to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend". The Reuters News Service instructed reporters not to write stories about terrorist threats.[29] In other parts of the world the media have been used by terrorists to deliver messages to the world; the kidnapping of journalists by drug traffickers was commonly used in Colombia in the late 1980s for that purpose.[29]

48. While there have been relatively few people killed in highly publicized terrorist attacks, the political and military consequences have been far-reaching. The fate of Governments, relations among States, scientific exchanges, tourism and trade have been affected. In some cities, for instance, extremists have used widely publicized attacks on tourists as an economic weapon. The effects of such attacks can be especially devastating in developing countries that depend on tourists as a source of hard currency. International tensions, domestic repression, and support for counter-violence have increased. Press coverage, especially telecasts of terrorist acts, has introduced a new dimension into the policy-making process.[21] Countries could diminish the impact of this new dimension by working together and with the international media to agree on a universal approach to covering terrorist acts.

49. In the medium of television, technology may be of some assistance in balancing the rights of viewers with the right of freedom of information. A device called the VyouControl™, developed at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada, allows the viewer to exercise his or her own judgment and filter out television programming and videos deemed by the viewer to be inappropriate. Specially equipped televisions compare the assigned ratings on the incoming signals to preselected thresholds of acceptability chosen by the viewer. Programmes with ratings higher that those thresholds are screened out. This protects the freedom of the media to broadcast such programmes, but allows audiences to judge what they deem appropriate for themselves and their families.[30]

A. Regulations and enforcement

50. As is the case with the regulation of social institutions generally, little can be done by legal means to make the mass media comply with regulations. Adequate monitoring of mass media material by regulatory agencies is virtually impossible without massive expenditures on equipment and personnel. The criteria for monitoring and regulating media content will also always be controversial, especially in pluralist societies.[18]

51. Despite such difficulties, countries around the world are trying to regulate the mass media industry and to seek compliance in enforcing regulations. At the Montreal International Colloquium on Television Violence in 1993, measures to control television violence were discussed. Recently, public authorities in Australia, Belgium, the European Communities, the Council of Europe, Canada and the United States have introduced general principles supporting community and moral standards. Public and private broadcasters are obliged to respect those values when developing and applying their own codes of conduct. Classification systems, viewer warnings and specified programming periods have been the most common measures adopted to date. Australia and New Zealand have developed classification systems categorizing children's television programming according to programme type, age group and time of day. Other countries, such as France and Belgium, have on-screen warning symbols as tools for parents to use when selecting and evaluating programmes for their children. Most efforts to reduce violence on television are strictly voluntary. Accordingly, it is difficult for regulators to discipline broadcasters who do not abide by these voluntary standards. Some countries, however, have decided that disciplinary measures are needed. Authorities in France, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have passed laws to fine private broadcasters who break the fundamental principles. In other countries, a range of disciplinary measures exist, such as putting conditions on, or even suspending or denying, a broadcasting licence.

52. There are different concerns in developing countries, where the powerful and sophisticated media of more developed countries can overwhelm indigenous culture, leading to a loss of traditional cultural values, social instability and, inevitably, crime and violence. Media programming from developed countries may raise unrealistic and unobtainable economic expectations. A remedy could be to have culturally sensitive community media outlets which can emphasize domestic traditions and values. Such is the case in central Australia, where aboriginal communities have established their own satellite-transmitted television and radio services, with native language programming that emphasizes cultural values.

B. Perceptions of crime and the justice system

53. An important role for the mass media is to portray the justice system accurately. This involves not only teaching the public about their rights, but also illustrating the consequences of crime. A 1994 survey conducted in Canada showed that there is a considerable gap between perceptions of criminal activity and reality. Canadians believe that they are more at risk than they really are. They also are generally poorly educated about the criminal justice system, have insufficient knowledge of the nature of legal rights, and believe the system to be more lenient than it really is. Perceptions of offenders are also inaccurate. Canadians overestimate the rate of recidivism for inmates on parole, and they believe that penal institutions are too comfortable, although they may be personally ignorant of prison conditions.[51]

54. The media also have a role to play in drawing attention to "white collar" crime and corporate malfeasance, immensely damaging forms of crime which can have long-lasting financial consequences for national economies. As the public watchdog, the media are in a position to monitor and uncover potential crimes, and to educate citizens regarding the threats posed by white collar crime. The media have, perhaps understandably, been negligent in its coverage of non-violent crime. It is, of course, less spectacular, more complicated to cover, and less personally immediate than violent crimes or crimes against the person. Nevertheless, the tendency of the media to emphasize the sensational leads to a skewed public conception of the nature of crime. In Argentina, a study found considerable distortion in the portrayal of crime in major newspapers: 40 per cent of all crime reported in the news was about crime against persons (compared to an actual rate of such crime of only 17 per cent), and 18.7 per cent was about crime against property (compared to an actual rate of 70 per cent).[52]

55. Another important role of the media is to highlight the failings of civil society and the criminal justice system. Where the police and other law enforcement agencies do not take action to control corruption and other forms of crime, the media often step in. Exposing the failings or corruption within the criminal justice system is part of crime prevention. For example, in Thailand, where the Government has been fairly open in acknowledging its many problems, the aggressive media are forcing the country to confront them.[53] Unfortunately the media, in pursuing this mission, often creates an atmosphere of distrust in some communities. Media coverage of scandals has led many to believe that community leaders - politicians, religious leaders, bureaucrats, lawyers - are "slick, articulate insiders" who are not to be trusted. Efforts such as the Street Law Programme in South Africa can dispel some of those perceptions by making people aware of how the legal system can be used to protect them. The Street Law Programme, through various activities, workbooks, camps and formal training, helps participants from some 240 South African schools to learn about democracy, human rights, court procedures etc.

C. Design and evaluation of mass-media campaigns

56. Case-study materials and published analyses of a broad range of mass-media campaigns provide a useful tool for the design, implementation and evaluation of such campaigns. The area of "unintended and unwanted effects"[54] needs to be taken into account, so as to ensure that the focus and purpose of the campaigns emerges without distortion. In this, planning and discussion must be informed by more general works on public communication campaigns.[55] For developing countries, lessons may be learned from successful entertainment-education strategies. The remarkable popularity of the Mexican telenovela,[56] is an excellent example. This form has seen substantial diffusion from Mexico to other developing countries.[57] Similarly, many adult education programmes that have been used effectively in developing countries may serve as useful models for development of crime prevention programmes.[58]

57. It is important to recognize the great diversity of initiatives that might be included under the general rubric of mass media crime prevention programmes. General campaigns may serve a valuable function, but specific targets and specific programmes geared to those targets must be identified. Furthermore, crime

prevention programmes should not be considered to be specifically addressed to potential criminals. Those vulnerable to crime must be educated in what action they may be able to take to prevent their own victimization. Journalists and broadcasters should be targeted to inform them of the ways in which they can be effective in crime prevention. In that connection, a tragic example of the powerful influence of the media is provided by the role of *Radio Télévision Libre des Milles Collines* in orchestrating the massacres that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 (see E/CN.4/1995/71, para. 9). Community leaders and teachers should be made aware of their responsibilities in crime prevention. The role of the teacher in educating students about the power and effects of the media through mass-media literacy campaigns is particularly important.

D. Media literacy

58. Media literacy education is increasingly seen as a method of offsetting some of the more egregious socially negative effects of television and other mass media. For the most part, however, media literacy efforts have been confined to developed countries. In developing countries the scarcity of educational resources, and the interests of the media élites (often indistinguishable from the political élites) have pre-empted attempts at media literacy training (an exception might be seen in the efforts of the Brazilian Christian Union of Social Communication, which teaches media literacy in an attempt to democratize the media in Brazil).[39] As information technology increasingly makes government regulation of the media less effective, this situation can be expected to change substantially. When governments no longer control the media (because of satellite transmissions direct to homes, for example), they no longer have an interest in keeping their populations ignorant of the persuasive techniques used by the mass media. Indeed, media literacy becomes a positive priority in order to defend institutions from "cultural imperialism" and enhance national identity. As technology makes it harder to regulate the media, media literacy will become a more important tool for reducing the negative effects of media than censorship.[40] Therefore, media literacy will be increasingly important in both developed and developing countries. As a crime prevention tool, it provides a valuable resource for preparing children and adults to be critical of the violent, socially negative and consumerist messages that can be so prevalent in the media. Governments, parents, educators, social organizations, and the public can all play a part in encouraging media literacy.

59. Effective media literacy education involves the following:[41]

(a) Critical thinking: the ability to uncover explicit and implicit meanings of a media message whether verbal, visual or aural;

(b) Critical analysis: making the connection between what is in the media and its significance to daily life;

(c) Creative design skills: learning to express individual views through the media;

(d) Preparation for citizenship in a media culture: understanding how the media works in a society and taking personal responsibility for what messages are received from it.

60. Countries have a role to play by educating their populations about the influence of the mass media and how to evaluate the media messages within the context of their societal and cultural perspectives. There are national media literacy programmes in many countries, including Australia, Belgium and New Zealand. The "Young Media Australia" programme collects and disseminates information and publishes material for teachers, parents, childhood professionals, legislators, young people and media producers. In the Russian Federation, courses to prepare teachers in media education take place at the Moscow Lenin Pedagogical University. In Brazil, government-mandated communications studies, including media literacy, are an integral part of the school curriculum. The Philippine Association for Media Education has worked with its partners to develop a media education training package which is available to schools. In developing countries, where

mass distribution of knowledge may be more difficult than in countries with a high level of technology, media literacy information could be shared with families and educators through the same vehicles that currently distribute public health information, such as the radio, and through partnerships with organizations that are more likely to reach all socio-economic groups. A creative example of dissemination of media-literacy information is the voter-education programme recently conducted in South Africa. Radio was used extensively together with such devices as audio cassette tapes played in commuter mini-buses.

V. BALANCING RESPONSIBILITIES: GOVERNMENTS, THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

A. Role of Governments

61. One of the most vital functions Governments can play in crime prevention efforts lies in social marketing, that is, "selling" positive attitudes and behaviours. Social marketing uses marketing techniques to generate discussion, promote information, influence attitudes, values and behaviours, and create a climate conducive to social change.[42] While social marketing on its own will not necessarily lead to behaviour changes, it can change the perceptions, attitudes and opinions that underlie behaviour. This strategy has been used successfully by non-profit groups in Zaire in an attempt to reduce transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). A public marketing campaign increased condom sales twentyfold.[43] Governments, because of their size, influence and resources, are ideally placed to plan and implement social marketing campaigns.

62. Governments can promote crime prevention campaigns which employ multimedia strategies in conjunction with community-based involvement. One United States campaign that was aimed at preventing violent crime included dramatic ads for television, radio, newspapers, billboards and advertisements in public transit. This campaign was further supported by a toll-free number which could be used to obtain printed information that addressed (in clear language) the many things communities and individuals can do to reduce violent crime.[44]

63. The Arab Security Studies and Training Centre at Riyadh has produced a number of videos on drugs and crime prevention for Arab countries. Their education resources include posters and a monthly magazine giving trends in crime in the Arab world and information on the training of police. In France, an experimental programme involves a weekly round table where the media, the judiciary and the police meet to look at how the media have dealt with crime stories and their encounters with the criminal justice system. This is an important step, and an adaptable method for other countries to use, in bringing media and criminal justice personnel together in a professional and constructive relationship.

64. Government agencies, in cooperation with other partners and with community support, can use creative approaches to fulfil their role in crime prevention, despite the steady decline in human and financial resources available to them. The National Film Board of Canada recently established an Awareness Network to fill the need for an interactive information and communication vehicle to capitalize on the efforts of Canadians who are working in the area of protecting children and youth. The Network will link those workers with experts and entities in other fields, such as educators, parents' groups, academics, child-care professionals, non-governmental organizations, journalists and government officials nationally and internationally. Its long-term goal is to help the public become less tolerant of gratuitous media violence and more diligent in protecting children from its harmful effects. In the United States, the "Squash It" campaign to prevent youth violence combines the efforts and expertise of educators, the media, Government at all levels, advertisers, popular spokespeople, youth and many others to promote a social norm that says it is "cool" and smart to walk away from potentially violent situations. The term "squash it" which means, "back off, withdraw, it's not worth it" was already popular among youth in inner-city neighbourhoods.[45] The campaign seeks to build on this positive aspect of street life by reinforcing and validating decisions to disengage from potentially

violent confrontations. It is premised on the belief that popular culture can shape social norms without depending on solutions to deeper problems. Many of the campaign's integral elements, including its hand signal and logo design, were developed with input from the youths whom it targets in its message.

65. Governments can also act as role models by establishing a national policy not to advertise government initiatives in media which portray violence, explicit sex etc. Governments can encourage feedback from the public to guide future policies in all areas of mass media and crime prevention.

66. Governments, corporations and major organizations are also well positioned to recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the field of mass media and crime prevention. The Michener Award and Fellowships in Canada, the Walkley Award in Australia, the Pulitzer Prize in the United States and the *Prix jeunesse* in France are some examples of honours awarded to the media for responsible journalism and public service.

B. Role of the media

67. The mass media have the potential to play a large role in correcting or preventing social ills, including crime. They are in a position to investigate corruption, challenge the legitimacy of laws, institutions and authorities, and participate, or indeed act as a catalyst, in the movement toward a healthier society. Their role as an antagonist to Government and authority does not, however, mean that they cannot cooperate with political institutions in crime prevention and education programmes. The media may also, by providing background information to enable audiences to consider significant events in context, contribute to greater understanding among people.

68. There are many ways in which the media can help promote crime prevention programmes. For instance, national and international media spokespersons could be named as advocates for crime prevention. By lending their names and efforts and the power of their institutions to the cause, such spokespersons could make a vital contribution to public awareness of crime. The techniques of popular entertainment can also be effective in programmes to raise awareness of crime prevention. In the United States, for example, the cartoon figure of Smokey Bear has been used with great success to promote wilderness fire safety. Such symbols can be very effective in publicizing important issues. The media can also be a strong partner in community-based crime prevention programmes, working with families, employers, housing and social service officials and people involved in planning leisure activities.

C. Role of communities and the public

69. In the developed world, the media are becoming increasingly responsive to their audience. In those countries where the media depend on advertising or consumer spending, the public wields enormous influence over the mass media. Besides regulating their own viewing choices, members of the public can put pressure on the industry to choose responsible programming. As consumers, they have the power to influence the industry by boycotting unacceptable content or the products of the advertisers who sponsor it.[46] Companies that sell products to the public cannot be callous about censure; there is a growing awareness that they will be held responsible for the programming their advertising money puts on the air. This cannot, however, be seen as an infallible remedy. In the United States, for example, the overwhelmingly commercial nature of the popular media has led to programming that is violent, sexist and sensational. Public values are therefore not always reflected in private consumption of the media.

70. However, in many developing countries, advertising is not the main source of revenue for the media, and cannot therefore be as influential in shaping policy and content. The public in some developing countries, while very interested in the media and its messages, does not have the economic capacity to consume media at the same level; the role of advertising is thus diminished.[47] In some cases, however,

notably action programmes exported from the United States, producers rely on foreign sales to sustain programmes that would not be profitable if they depended on domestic sales only. In 1993, the eight largest United States television companies exported US$ 3 billion worth of programming, almost double the level of 1988 and 1989;[48] audiences in importing countries could therefore be in a position to influence creative decisions on the content or indeed the availability of such programmes. Speaking at a 1975 symposium on television violence, one of the late Canadian literary critics and theorists, Northrop Frye, remarked upon the need for public pressure to promote change: "Producers of irresponsible programmes, like producers of motor cars which are death traps, will not improve what they are doing so long as it is profitable, until they are forced to do so by the general pressure of society."[49]

71. Partnerships between government, the media, the public and members of public institutions (educational, religious, professional etc.) can be very effective in crime prevention. Business partnerships can also be effective. In England and Wales, crime costs the business community billions of pounds a year. Many businesses recognize that crime and the fear of crime are among the major concerns of their customers, their employees and their shareholders, and they are willing to participate in crime prevention programmes as part of their duty as good "corporate citizens". Benefits to corporations for such participation include public good will and visibility for their products. Corporate sponsorship involves establishing close working partnerships and tailoring proposals to suit corporate strategies and publicity goals. Corporate involvement can contribute much to our understanding of how to solve problems, develop communications networks, manage change and work efficiently and effectively.

72. The police can play a large role in determining what messages about the justice system and specific crimes and what information about offenders are conveyed to the public through the mass media. When a crime is committed, the media in many countries look to the police for information to report; how the police convey that information often determines how the information is relayed and, to some degree, the audience's interpretations of the event and the context in which it occurred. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, for example, is considering a policy that would greatly decrease the use of ethnic labels by police professionals who brief the media. They believe that, by adopting such a policy, the mass media could help eliminate the tendency for the public to assume that what they perceive in the media is the whole truth, a perception which can generate negative stereotypes. A decrease in negative stereotyping might help decrease tension between racial groups and prevent the resulting criminal activity.

73. Other training efforts around the world include the first specialized post-graduate university training programme on family violence, offered at Buenos Aires. One of the objectives of the programme is to help spread scientific knowledge about family violence, and thus dispel the many myths and prejudices in wide circulation.[16]

D. International role

74. As both the media and crime become more international, the cooperation of the international community to deal with them becomes more critical. This is particularly true for countries where most programming (television, videos, films etc.) is imported. Media initiatives for crime prevention should be comprehensive and sensitive to cultural differences, and governments will need to cooperate to ensure that the objectives are attainable. Regulation of international media will also require international coordination.

75. Collaborative efforts initiated to date include the eight-country research project conducted in 1988 to study violence on television in Asia.[50] A further example is the efforts of 20 producers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, all of whom were concerned with improving programming for young people in their rapidly changing countries. Indeed, the World Children's Television Summit, held at Melbourne, Australia, in March 1995, can be seen as a critically important example of international cooperation. Member States could combine their efforts and expertise to develop resource

information for worldwide distribution. While there are many worthy examples of appropriate resource kits, a model which could be adapted internationally is "The mountain and beyond". This multi-media (video, video-guide and book) resource kit, developed by a group of associations in Canada, promotes a collaborative approach to domestic violence.[51]

VI. SPECIAL TARGET AUDIENCES

76. Some crime prevention programmes might legitimately interpret "crime prevention" narrowly as a specific intervention to prevent an occurrence. Others might interpret it broadly, as a contribution to a sociocultural climate in which crime is understood in its complexity. A necessary first step in planning any use of the mass media to promote the objectives of crime prevention is the classification of objectives and target audiences. Some programmes might be specifically targeted to the producers of mass media. If, for example, the objective is to improve reporting in newspapers and television, the target audience might comprise journalists, editors, directors of news programming and journalism educators. If the objective is to encourage more pro-social depictions of violence in television drama, the target audience might be producers, writers and directors.[13]

77. Other efforts might be directed towards particular communities, as in community-based crime prevention programmes, or towards teachers, as in media literacy efforts. Other programmes might be specifically targeted at those at particular risk of becoming agents or victims of various types of crime. The groups falling into this category are described below.

A. Children and youth

78. Violence and terror have long been major themes of mythology, drama, literature and popular culture. Concern about their influence on public life, on children and young people in particular, and on crime, as well as their implications for social control in general, is more recent.[23] Much research has been generated by fears that violence and terror in the media brutalize children and undermine the social order. The evidence shows that consistent exposure to media violence may encourage aggressive tendencies, desensitize some and isolate others, intimidate many and trigger violent action in a few.[23] A study carried out in Austria showed that violence in the media coupled with general emotional deficits can reduce inhibitions about the use of violence by young people.[52]

79. It would be too facile to blame the media entirely for the problems experienced by children. There are, in fact, many causal factors. Some children are more vulnerable than others, depending on their age, their social, emotional and psychological stability and their family background. Videos and video games, pornography, violence on television programmes and in the news, cartoons, comic books, music and music videos and advertising all play roles in influencing children. In many countries, epidemics such as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the effects of war, poverty, famine and other natural disasters contribute to increased vulnerability.

80. There is much being done to counteract the influence of the media on children. A 1989 directive of the Council of Europe states that "Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that television broadcasting by broadcasters under their jurisdictions does not include programmes which might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, in particular those that involve pornography or gratuitous violence.[53]

81. Violence is often a core ingredient of fictional programming on television which dramatizes disruptive forces in society and the process of restoring order by portraying heroes and villains.[54] Many people model and evaluate their behaviour on the example of their heroes; the choice of heroes therefore has a fundamental

effect on the kind of society that is created. Every society needs its heroes to help inspire dreams and shape goals for young people.[55] Showing criminals and criminality in a less glamorous light might lead to criminality losing some of its romantic appeal. Substituting characters who use methods other than violence to triumph over evil, like conflict resolution, might go a long way towards creating new heroes for young people to emulate.

82. Governments could consider asking young people how they feel about violence in the mass media, how it affects them and whether they think change is necessary. During a recent study in the United States, researchers were told that children think their peers are influenced by the media, that television should help teach them right from wrong, and that the shows they are seeing now do not reflect the kinds of issues they are facing on their own. Most of the children surveyed had plenty of good things to say about the media as well, leading researchers to conclude that both children's concerns and their praise should be heeded.[56] An informal study carried out by one newspaper recently found that children do want change; one little boy commented that "you see all those crimes and you think everyone you meet on the street is going to hurt you".[57] The debate on violence in the mass media and its effects must include consultations with children to ensure that they are given a forum in which to voice their opinions and share their concerns.

83. Countries have taken a number of different approaches to the question of how to shield children from the potentially harmful effects of the media. There is a growing trend around the world to reserve broadcast time for family viewing. Care in the scheduling of programmes has inspired the creation of family viewing policies, an approach which obliges broadcasters and parents to share in the responsibility for protecting children from explicit and implicit violent programmes following a designated period. A more radical approach is being followed in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which recently passed a law banning satellite dishes, in part to prevent the corruption of their youth by media messages received over what some call "satanic antennas".[58]

B. Women

84. Dealing with the issue of women, crime prevention and the mass media can often be thorny because of the diverse views among countries about women's rights and what constitutes crime against women. These views are influenced by race, ethnicity, national culture, age and generational differences and many other factors. Women live in a myriad of different political, economic and cultural contexts; solutions to the issues women face, including mass media and crime prevention, are not universally applicable.[59] Issues specific to the mass media include: the media as defender of meaning and the determination of cultural definitions of sex roles; the use of stereotypes in portraying women, governed by societal norms; equal access for women to the media and their participation in the decision-making process; and the use of women's bodies for pornographic or other degrading commercial ends, especially in advertising. The media can perform a valuable task in uncovering and publicizing discriminatory practices based on gender, such as the failure to report or record sexual assaults, the failure to acknowledge the existence of family-based violence and the lack of protection given women in many societies against sexual harassment and exploitation.[35]

85. In many countries, women have developed alternative media to balance the messages being received from the mainstream media. Alternative publications, including newspapers, journals, magazines and newsletters, are perhaps the most established of such media. In Morocco, the aim of the Tamania Mars is to provide information to women, to establish a rallying point to fight against patriarchy, and to work for human rights in a more just and egalitarian society. At New Delhi, the Women's Feature Service offers syndicated news written by about 130 women journalists around the world with a focus on development as seen from a feminist perspective.[35] In Uganda, the International Federation of Women Lawyers has instituted a programme to raise awareness about the law and legal rights. Radio broadcasts of its messages are transmitted in local languages.

86. Radio, film and videos are also used around the world to reach women. In Chile and the Philippines, Isis International operates as a women's information and communications service with more than 50,000 contacts in 150 countries. The organization publishes a directory of more than 600 films, videos and slide shows by women in developing countries. Radio Tierra in Chile and Feminist International Radio Endeavour in Costa Rica seek "to give a voice to those who never had one". In Zimbabwe, the Federation of African Media Women has established a project to provide rural dwellers access to national radio by organizing more than 45 radio listening clubs in rural areas. At Buenos Aires, Satellite EVE has a national focus and seeks to stimulate women's creativity and ability to organize and use the power of the media for the construction of a more pluralistic, equitable and just society. EVE uses video, photography and investigative journalism as its main vehicles.[45]

87. Women have traditionally used informal networks to exchange ideas and share their experiences. As technology becomes more readily available throughout the world, women will be able to use computer networks for similar purposes and to access on-line services through which to continue their networking. Two existing services are *Mujer a Mujer*, a Mexico-based women's collective, and Women Envision, an electronic bulletin by Isis.

C. The aged

88. The aged share with women and children a special vulnerability to crime. Like women and children, the particular forms of crime to which they often fall victim are not given sufficient attention. The responsibility of the media as a public educator obliges it to give attention to issues like elder abuse by families and by institutions. Like wife and child abuse, elder abuse must be revealed as a public crime, not a private family matter. There is also a role for the media in educating seniors about personal security and crime prevention strategies. Sensational reporting of violent crime by the mass media may also lead seniors to lose confidence in their personal security and to feel vulnerable. Thus, the aged have an interest in accurate reporting of crime by mass media that will allow them to make practical decisions about their personal security.

VII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

89. Much of what people know was taught through stories. That process, which once was home-made and community-inspired, is now, in many countries, mostly mass-produced and results from a complex manufacturing and marketing process. Children no longer learn most of their values from home, school, religious institutions, their communities or indeed their native countries. The mass media have become the most important moral and ethical educator in children's lives. Developed countries are struggling with the profound effects of such a change, but its more critical consequences may be felt in developing countries. While developed countries have cultural traditions more in tune with the product currently disseminated by the mass media, developing countries do not. The strengths and values of more traditional societies may be threatened by the emergence of new information technologies dominated by the developed world, and the result may be a cultural vacuum and social instability.

90. Information, education and communication technologies include globally linked telephone, television and data transmission networks, and new multimedia technologies. This new arena for mass-media communications offers a fertile ground in which to extend crime prevention efforts. The emergence of global information networks, facilitated by new technologies, can transcend national borders and make physical distance less significant as a barrier to communication. While the new technologies may be heralded as signs of human progress, they carry inherent dangers which should be addressed by international organizations.

91. At the Information Society Ministerial Conference of the seven major industrialized countries (Group of Seven), held at Brussels in February 1995, senior officials focused on the new technologies that are contributing to the development of an open, competitive and integrated worldwide information infrastructure. Ministers, believing that the convergence of informatics and communications will have as much of an impact today as the industrial revolution had on the nineteenth century, addressed the economic, social and technical issues that have arisen as a result of the new technologies.

92. The new arena raises issues concerning the cultural sovereignty and control of what is being received and the impact made particularly, but not exclusively, on children. Anyone with a telephone and a modem is now no longer bound by the media controls of their State, but is able to receive information (of whatever variety) from anywhere in the world. The level of control of information on the Internet is ineffectual. Cyberspace has become a new venue for crime, especially fraud and information theft.[60] What is more at issue, however, is the availability of information that may facilitate crime (A/CONF.169/13/Add.1, p. 7, paras. 23-26). For example, it is possible to find instructions on the Internet on how to build a bomb, how to organize a racist political cell, or how to commit suicide. The Internet can also be used for political means and can be instrumental in bringing about political change, it can also have a detrimental impact on the recipients of information, for example, with the dissemination of hate literature. Cyberspace may turn out to be the ultimate mass media, because it is not only consumed by the masses, but also generated by them.

93. Countries around the world are dealing with the impact of the new technology in various ways. In Australia, all new computer games are now subject to a national classification scheme, similar to that for films and videos, before they can be offered for sale. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) recently opened public hearings on the information highway to help shape a twenty-first-century policy framework for the country's communications sector. An interactive media festival was held at Los Angeles to encourage creators of children's television to consider working with interactive technologies (computers, CD-ROM, CD-I and on-line networks) in developing new products combining the active engagement of computers with the storytelling ability of television. In the United Kingdom, a study undertaken on behalf of the Professional Association of Teachers researched how teachers perceive the effect of the new technologies on children.[61] In addition, the Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., sponsored a symposium entitled "The information revolution in the Arab world", which considered the commercial, cultural, social and political dimensions and implications of such developments. Telecommunications specialists, mass-media representatives, businesspersons, humanists and social scientists debated the issues, including control and censorship and cultural issues. These and many other examples highlight the efforts being taken to generate much-needed public discussion of these issues.

94. The present paper evolved around the following two themes: first, the power of the media can and should be an effective and vital part of international efforts to prevent crime; secondly, since there are many examples of good practice or ways to engage the media in efforts already being undertaken, such experiences could serve as examples of how crime prevention can be practised with an active involvement of the media down to the level of communities. Based on the points raised, and bearing in mind the discussion and recommendations of the five regional preparatory meetings for the Ninth Congress, the workshop on mass media and crime prevention may wish to consider the future possible directions outlined below.

A. At the national level

95. Governments could consider the following action:

(a) **Making provision for freedom of information in legislation;**

(b) Recognizing that access to information is a key factor in permitting the media to play an active role in crime prevention;

(c) Reasserting the role of a free press as part of the democratic process;

(d) Developing and applying fair and objective procedures based on the rule of law to provide for access of the media to sensitive materials and information;

(e) Ensuring the maintenance, to the greatest degree possible, of cultural diversity and values when considering the role of the media in crime prevention, taking also into account the impact of global communications systems on the social and cultural structure, including technologically less developed countries;

(f) Encouraging the authorities concerned, particularly in countries with a high rate of illiteracy, to use the media as a valuable means for promoting crime prevention by audiovisual or graphic means;

(g) Increasing education programmes which promote media literacy and informed choice and decision-making about media issues;

(h) Encouraging media reporting on all types of crime and methods of prevention, while recognizing that the prime emphasis on reporting of violent crime may distort prevention efforts, often creating unrealistic fears and anxieties about the risks of being victimized;

(i) Establishing national recognition awards for responsible crime prevention efforts by the media;

(j) Establishing a national coordination or advisory body or an ombudsperson to address the issue of crime prevention and the media. That could also be done with a view to bringing media executives, professional organizations and other relevant groups into partnership with government and the community in order to assist in the formulation of programmes in support of preventive policies and efforts, to provide factual information on crime and crime prevention, and to formulate programmes that promote crime prevention;

(k) Developing, with full participation of the media, professional associations and other non-governmental organizations concerned, codes of conduct and related standards on the media and crime prevention, and establishing mechanisms to ensure compliance;

(l) Taking a leadership role on the issue of mass media and crime prevention by not advertising in media that disseminate violent messages;

(m) Initiating activities for the media to be sensitized to the impact their reporting has on crime prevention and target audiences.

96. The mass media could consider:

(a) As far as major global media networks are concerned, seeking to balance their reporting of crime and paying more attention to regional, cultural and other variables that affect attitudes to crime prevention and control;

(b) Working towards voluntary self-regulation, particularly by developing, with full participation of professional associations and other non-governmental organizations concerned, voluntary codes of conduct and related standards on the media and crime prevention, and establishing mechanisms to ensure compliance;

(c) Encouraging more specialized and expert reporting of criminal events, with a balanced appraisal of the measures to be taken to prevent non-violent as well as violent crime;

(d) Sharing findings and discussing issues and solutions;

(e) Conducting research into the role of the media in crime prevention, focusing also on countries with less sophisticated communication technologies;

(f) Proactively seeking to collaborate with Government, public institutions, professional associations, action groups, non-governmental organizations, and members of the general public to identify and work on issues of common concern related to crime prevention.

B. At the international level

97. The United Nations could consider:

(a) Reasserting the role of a free press as part of the democratic process and assisting Member States in their efforts to do so, particularly in emerging democracies;

(b) Coordinating and assisting Member States in their efforts to further develop the role of mass media in the prevention of crime;

(c) Undertaking practical steps in assisting Member States by, *inter alia*:

(i) Developing a source manual on standards of good practice, as well as paying special attention to the role of the media in crime prevention efforts, especially amongst children and adolescents;

(ii) Setting up a section of experts on media and crime prevention in the roster of experts of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme;

(iii) Developing multidisciplinary training resources, including programmes in media literacy and modules on mass media and crime prevention, to add to the curricula of universities and professional training programmes, such as schools of journalism, police colleges, schools of criminology and faculties of education;

(d) Promoting transborder cooperation at the international, regional and subregional levels, which could be initiated by convening a follow-up interregional training course on mass media and crime prevention, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary funds;

(e) Facilitating, in cooperation with relevant specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions, exchanges of audiovisual material which could be used in preventive action, contributing to the evaluation of information campaigns and implementing international cooperative research on the impact of messages transmitted by the media on crime prevention.

98. Other international bodies could consider:

(a) Organizing, jointly with the professional organizations concerned, periodic meetings of journalist and media executives from different countries to exchange views on crime prevention strategies and the portrayal of crime in the media;

(b) Offering training courses for journalists who report on crime and crime prevention issues to improve their insight into international perspectives and policies on crime prevention and criminal justice;

(c) Creating an international prize or award for outstanding productions, with a view to stimulating the production of media programmes on crime prevention.

Notes

[1]*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 11* (E/1994/31), chap. V, para. 19.

[2]*Third United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Stockholm, 9-18 August 1965: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.67.IV.1), para. 269.

[3]*Fourth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Kyoto, Japan, 17-26 August 1970: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.71.IV.8), para. 132.

[4]*Fifth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Geneva, 1-12 September 1975: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.2), para. 369 (p).

[5]*Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Caracas, Venezuela, 25 August-5 September 1980: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.81.IV.4), chap. IV, para. 64.

[6]*Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Milan, 26 August-6 September 1985: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, E.86.IV.1), chap. IV, paras. 79, 81 and 281.

[7]*Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, 27 August-7 September 1990: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.IV.2), chap. I, sect. C.1.

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Annex

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF THE WORKSHOP ON THE TOPIC "MASS MEDIA AND CRIME PREVENTION", TO BE HELD WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NINTH UNITED NATIONS CONGRESS ON THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND THE TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS

The workshop is intended to encourage the exchange of views and experiences, to review initiatives in the design and utilization of successful crime prevention programmes, to show how such programmes relate to the mass media, and to bring the two worlds of criminal justice and the mass media closer together. It will be held on 1 May 1995.

The organizer of the workshop plans to utilize the Internet to post regular reports on the Ninth Congress and on workshop proceedings to the AJC Net, where it may be accessed through World-Wide Web and distributed to interested individuals and organizations. During the workshop a separate event will be arranged to enable schoolchildren in several schools across Canada and in Cairo to use the Internet and the SolGen demonstration programme of the Solicitor General of Canada to communicate on issues related to the Ninth Congress.

Morning

1. Introductory remarks, including opening statement by the Minister of Justice of Canada.

2. Illustrating the problem of crime (video montage).*

   Panel of journalists - discussion of case-studies.

3. Future dimensions of the mass media.**

   Redefining the scope and role of the media.

   Demonstrations.

Afternoon

4. Educational role of the mass media.***

   Considering negative and positive effects of the media.

   Role of the media in stereotyping crime.

   Potential for positive change.

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*The objective of this segment is to demonstrate how serious crime issues are being addressed by the media. The examples given will serve as general case-studies in the discussion. The moderator will ensure that the examples are not seen as isolated incidents, but as illustrative of a much more complex problem.

**This segment will define the mass media in all their forms, including projections for the future.

***This segment will provide for a constructive debate on the role of the mass media within a crime prevention context.

5. Case-studies of demonstration projects using different media.*

6. Future directions in the mass media and crime prevention.**

7. Global Forum.***

   Criminal justice and the mass media: a platform for action.

8. School Net and the community.****

   Linking of schoolchildren around the world using School Net - an electronic interactive medium for children connected to the Internet.

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*This segment will identify some of the best practices currently applied, and demonstrate to participants crime prevention programmes worth considering in their own communities.

**This segment will look to the future and identify specific opportunities in the months and years ahead.

***This will be a global town hall, similar to those aired by the Canadian Broadcasting Company and other networks.

****This segment will establish a direct link with communities worldwide and update them on the events of the Ninth Congress. It is a grass-roots exercise that will occur on each night of the Congress. However, on the first night, a media event will be held to let people know that the network exists.